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APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

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TITLE:	CIRCUIT ARRANGEMENT AND METHOD FOR GENERATING AN X- RAY TUBE VOLTAGE
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CIRCUIT ARRANGEMENT AND METHOD FOR GENERATING AN X-RAY  
TUBE VOLTAGE

5           The invention relates to a circuit arrangement for  
generating an x-ray tube voltage, having an inverse  
rectifier circuit for generating a high-frequency  
alternating voltage, having a high-voltage generator for  
converting the high- frequency alternating voltage into a  
10 high voltage for the x- ray tube, and having a voltage  
controller, which on the basis of a deviation of an actual  
x-ray tube voltage from a set- point x-ray tube voltage  
generates a first controlling variable value for a  
controlling variable for the inverse rectifier circuit,  
15 for achieving an adaptation of the actual x-ray tube  
voltage to the set-point x-ray tube voltage. One such  
circuit arrangement is known from German Patent DE 29 43  
816 C2.

20           The invention also relates to an x-ray generator  
having such a circuit arrangement, an x-ray system having  
such an x-ray generator, and a corresponding method for  
generating an x-ray tube voltage.

25           To generate an x-ray tube voltage, modern x-ray  
generators often have circuit arrangements of the typed  
defined at the outset. Since a line frequency is first  
rectified and then converted back into a high-frequency  
alternating voltage that is finally transformed to a  
30 desired voltage, such generators are also known as high-  
frequency generators. The voltage controller serves to  
regulate the high voltage at the x-ray tube as optimally  
as possible in terms of time to a diagnostically required  
value with a requisite precision.

35           Compared to conventional generators, in which the

high voltage is first transformed using the line frequency present, then rectified, and finally delivered to the x-ray tube, such a circuit arrangement has the advantage that in principle, it can be made virtually independent of changes to a line voltage and to a tube current by means of a relatively fast closed-loop current circuit. The tube voltage is therefore highly replicable and can be kept constant. Compared to so-called direct voltage generators, in which a high voltage, transformed at line frequency and rectified, is finely regulated with the aid of triodes, high-frequency generators have the advantage of a relatively small structural volume and lower production costs. These advantages are the reason for the preferred use of such circuit arrangements in modern x-ray generators.

In conventional circuit arrangements of the type defined at the outset problems arise from the fact that parameters of a controlled system including an inverse rectifier and the high-voltage circuit, depending on the selected operating point of the x-ray tube, cover a wide range of values, and that in particular the inverse rectifier's resonance characteristic is a highly nonlinear member of the closed-loop control circuit. Moreover, if damage to the power semiconductor is to be avoided, an oscillating current of the inverse rectifier must not exceed a predetermined maximum value. In a conventional single-step x-ray tube voltage closed-loop control circuit, a control speed of the circuit must therefore be set to be at least slow enough that the oscillating circuit current, even during running up to speed or when being turned on, does not exceed the maximum allowable value. As a result, a small-signal behavior of the closed-loop control circuit is also slowed down, resulting in a slower elimination of interference

variables than would intrinsically be possible. Moreover, with this kind of a single-step control, the oscillating current is limited only indirectly. Therefore if the inverse rectifier is redimensioned, the control parameters  
5 of the controller must be adapted to suit the oscillating current. A simple voltage controller can thus meet the demands, even if only to an unsatisfactory extent.

It is therefore the object to create an alternative  
10 to the known prior art that permits high-speed control without exceeding the maximum allowable oscillating current.

This object is attained by a circuit arrangement as  
15 defined by claim 1 and by a method as defined by claim 9.

To that end, the circuit arrangement additionally has a measurement circuit for measuring an oscillating current, applied to one output of the inverse rectifier circuit, of the high-frequency alternating voltage. By  
20 means of an oscillating current controller, a second controlling variable value for the aforementioned controlling variable of the inverse rectifier circuit is then generated on the basis of a deviation of an  
25 ascertained actual oscillating current value from a predetermined maximum oscillating current value. The voltage controller and the oscillating current controller are then coupled in series to a switching device, which compares a first controlling variable value and a second  
30 controlling variable value and forwards only the lesser of the two controlling variable values, as the resultant controlling variable value, to the inverse rectifier circuit.

35 A second controlling variable value is ascertained

separately by means of an oscillating current controller on the basis of the deviations of an actual oscillating current value from a predetermined maximum oscillating current value and compared with the first controlling  
5 variable value of the voltage controller, and only the lesser of the two controlling variable values is delivered to the inverse rectifier circuit. It is attained that in a normal situation, very fast control by the voltage controller is accomplished; and only in extreme cases, if  
10 a critical range for the oscillating current is attained, is the voltage controller relieved by the oscillating current controller. In other words, in this "relief control", as long as the voltage controller is functioning "normally" and provides only an oscillating current that  
15 is less than the maximum allowable oscillating current, the controlling variable of the voltage controller will be sent on to the controlled system. Only if the maximum allowable oscillating current is reached or exceeded, which will be the case for instance during running up to  
20 speed as a rule, does the oscillating current controller come into play and limit the oscillating current to its maximum allowable value.

The dependent claims contain various especially  
25 advantageous features and refinements of the invention.

Preferably, for at least one of the two controllers and especially preferably for both controllers, a PI controller (proportional-integral controller) is used. An  
30 integral portion of the applicable controller has an object of forcing a steady-state control error, that is a control error in a steady state, to zero. Thus a persistent control deviation is reliably avoided. The controllers preferably then comprise series-connected  
35 proportional parts and integral parts. The advantage over

a parallel PI controller structure is that now the controller parameters pertaining to an amplification and an adjustment or a readjustment time can be set separately from one another. Instead of a PI controller, a PID controller can also be used.

In an especially preferred exemplary embodiment, an output of the switching device is connected to one input of the voltage controller and/or of the oscillating current controller, for feeding back the resultant controlling variable value. The voltage controller and/or the oscillating current controller are embodied such that they forward the resultant controlling variable value, if the controlling variable value generated by the applicable controller is not forwarded as the resultant controlling variable value.

To that end, the applicable controller compares the resultant controlling variable with its own controlling variable value that is internally also fed back. As a result of this variant, additional transient events caused by abrupt changes or surges upon switchover between the two controllers are reliably prevented.

Preferably, the switching device is embodied such that it sends at least a predetermined minimum controlling variable value as the resultant controlling variable value onward to the inverse rectifier circuit. Moreover, preferably at most, a predetermined maximum controlling variable value is sent onward, as the resultant controlling variable value, to the inverse rectifier circuit. Hence, the result controlling variable is actively limited to a range between the minimum value and the maximum value.

Since the controller parameters, being the controller amplification and the readjustment time, are as a rule dependent on the operating point, the voltage controller and/or the oscillating current controller preferably can each vary at least one parameter (i.e., controller parameter) of the applicable controller as a function of a set x-ray tube voltage and/or as a function of a set x-ray tube current. That parameter is then fed to corresponding inputs of the respective controller, and as a result the parameters of the applicable controllers are suitably set internally.

A circuit arrangement according to the invention can in principle be used to generate an x-ray tube voltage in any conventional x-ray generator, regardless of how the x-ray generator is constructed in terms of its further components, such as the various measuring instruments or the supply of heating current. The invention can also be employed largely independently of the concrete embodiment of the inverse rectifier circuit and of the high-voltage generator.

The invention will be described in further details below in terms of exemplary embodiments in conjunction with the drawings. From the described examples and drawings, still other advantages, characteristics and details of the invention will become apparent. Shown are:

Fig. 1a, a circuit diagram of a prior art circuit arrangement embodiment, with an inverse rectifier circuit and a high-voltage generator for generating a high voltage for an x-ray tube;

Fig. 1b, a block diagram of an embodiment of a closed-loop control circuit for the prior art circuit

arrangement shown in Fig. 1a;

Fig. 2, a block diagram of an embodiment of the closed-loop control circuit in a circuit arrangement  
5 according to the invention; and

Fig. 3, a more-detailed block diagram of an embodiment of the closed-loop control circuit of an especially advantageous variant of the circuit arrangement  
10 of the invention.

In Fig. 1a, typical components of an x-ray generator are shown; they represent the controlled system for the control of the x-ray tube voltage  $U_{R0}$ . These typical  
15 components include first an oscillating current inverse rectifier  $G_{si}$  coupled to a high-voltage generator  $G_{su}$ , which is in turn coupled to an x-ray tube 6.

The inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{si}$  has a plurality of  
20 power semiconductors 3, which are connected accordingly such that an intermediate circuit direct voltage  $V_z$  is converted into a high-frequency voltage. The inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{si}$  furthermore has a voltage frequency converter 2, which converts a voltage value  $Y(t)$  into a  
25 triggering frequency  $f_a$ , with which the power semiconductors 3 of the inverse rectifier  $G_{si}$  are triggered. The input voltage thus forms the controlling variable  $Y(t)$  of the controlled system.

30 The inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{si}$  here is an oscillating circuit inverse rectifier (inverter). However, still other inverse rectifier circuits can be used, such as a square-wave inverse rectifier or arbitrary series-connected or multi-resonance inverse rectifiers.



The high-voltage generator  $G_{su}$  comprises first a transformer 4 with a transmission factor  $\ddot{u}$  and second, a rectifier and smoothing device 5 connected downstream of the transformer. The x-ray tube voltage  $U_{R\delta}$  present at the output of the rectifier circuit and smoothing device 5 is delivered to the x-ray tube 6.

Fig. 1b shows a block diagram of a closed-loop control circuit according to the prior art. The inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{si}$  is represented here as a function block that includes a proportional transmission factor  $K_{si}$  and a time constant  $T_{si}$ . In particular, the proportional transmission factor  $K_{si}$ , because of resonance phenomena in the inverse rectifier  $G_{si}$ , is highly nonlinear, or in other words depends on the operating point of the inverse rectifier  $G_{si}$ .

The high-voltage generator  $G_{su}$  is also shown as a function block. It can be described by the proportional transmission factor  $K_{su}$  and the time constant  $T_{su}$ ; both of these variables are directly dependent on the x-ray tube voltage  $U_{R\delta}$  and the x-ray tube current  $I_{R\delta}$ , or in other words, as a function of the operating point, both of these variables cover a wide range of values. The oscillating current of the inverse rectifier  $G_{si}$  is represented by the symbol  $i_{sw}(t)$  and supplies the primary winding of the high-voltage transformer 4 of the high-voltage generator  $G_{su}$ . To avoid damaging the power semiconductors 3 in the inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{si}$ , the oscillating current  $i_{sw}(t)$  must not exceed a maximum value.

In the prior art, to regulate the output voltage of the high-voltage generator  $G_{su}$ , an actual voltage  $V_U(t)$  applied there at a certain instant  $t$  is compared with a set-point value  $W_U(t)$ , which corresponds to the desired x-

ray tube voltage  $U_{R0}$ ; that is, the difference is delivered to a voltage controller  $G_{RU}$ , which is once again shown here in the form of a function block.

5        This voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  is conventionally a simple PI controller, which as a function of the deviation of the actual value  $V_U(t)$  from the set-point value  $W_U(t)$  generates the controlling variable  $Y(t)$ , which is then fed to the input of the voltage frequency converter 2 of the  
10    inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{Si}$ .

      In this kind of conventional closed-loop control circuit shown in Fig. 1b, the control speed of the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  must be adjusted or set so slowly that the  
15    oscillating current  $i_{sw}(t)$  does not exceed the maximum allowable value even during running up to speed. This means that a fast control is not possible with the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$ , and thus interference can also be eliminated only slowly. Upon a re-dimensioning of the  
20    inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{Si}$ , the controller parameters of the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  must also be adapted accordingly, only an indirect limitation of the oscillating current  $i_{sw}(t)$  is accomplished.

25        Fig. 2, in comparison to Fig. 1b, clearly shows the change according to the invention in the structure of the closed-loop control circuit. In this relief control, a switchover 8 is made according to the invention between two closed-loop control circuit structures of  
30    substantially parallel construction.

      As in the prior art of Fig. 1b, here as well the x-ray tube voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  suitably forms a controlling variable  $Y_U(t)$  from the difference between the  
35    desired x-ray tube voltage, that is, the set-point voltage

$W_U(t)$ , and the factual x-ray tube voltage, that is, the actual x-ray tube voltage  $V_U(t)$ .

In addition, the oscillating current  $i_{sw}(t)$  is measured by means of a smoothing member 7. This smoothing member 7 is described in terms of control technology by the additional time constant  $T_{MI}$ . The actual oscillating current value  $V_I(t)$  thus ascertained is compared with a maximum allowable oscillating current value  $W_{I\_max}$  (or set-point value); that is, the difference between these values is formed and delivered to a further controller, which is the oscillating current controller  $G_{RI}$ , which likewise forms a controlling variable value  $Y_I(t)$  for the controlling variable for the inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{Si}$ .

Both the first controlling variable value  $Y_U(t)$ , which is formed by the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$ , and the second controlling variable value  $Y_I(t)$ , which is formed by the oscillating current controller  $G_{RI}$ , are delivered to a switching device 8. From between the two controlling variable values  $Y_U(t)$  and  $Y_I(t)$ , this switching device 8 selects the controlling variable value  $Y_U(t)$ , or  $Y_I(t)$  that at the current instant  $t$  is the lesser of the two, and sends the controlling variable value  $Y_U(t)$ , or  $Y_I(t)$ , as the resultant controlling variable value  $Y(t)$ , onward to the inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{Si}$ .

Here, both the controllers  $G_{RI}$ ,  $G_{RU}$  include a PI controller. A persistent control deviation is avoided by means of the integral component of the PI controller.

This relief control according to Fig. 2 has the advantage that in a "normal case", the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  is responsible for regulating the x-ray tube voltage. Only in those cases when the actual controlling variable

value  $Y_U(t)$  generated by the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  would cause the oscillating current  $i_{sw}(t)$  to exceed an allowed maximum value is the actual controlling variable value  $Y_I(t)$  generated by the oscillating current controller  $G_{RI}$  less than the controlling variable value  $Y_U(t)$  generated by the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$ . In those cases, the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  is therefore rendered quasi-inoperative, and only the oscillating current controller  $G_{RI}$  is active. This has the advantage that the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  can be adjusted considerably faster than in a closed-loop control circuit according to the prior art, and interference variables can thus be eliminated correspondingly quickly. Nevertheless, the relief in extreme cases reliably prevents the oscillating current  $i_{sw}(t)$  from exceeding the allowed maximum value.

Given the structure of the invention, in the normal case the x-ray tube voltage control itself is not slowed down by the measuring time constant  $T_{MI}$  of the oscillating current  $i_{sw}(t)$ , since the smoothing member 7 is not located in the closed-loop control circuit for the x-ray tube voltage.

Since the parameters of the two partial controlled systems are each dependent on the operating point of the x-ray tube 6, the dimensioning of the two controllers  $G_{RU}$ ,  $G_{RI}$  can be facilitated substantially if their parameters, being the controller amplifications and the readjustment times, are controlled as a function of the operating point. To that end, as schematically shown in Fig. 2, the values for the set x-ray tube voltage  $U_{R0}$  and the set x-ray tube current  $I_{R0}$  are delivered to the two controllers  $G_{RI}$ ,  $G_{RU}$ , respectively.

Fig. 3 shows a more-detailed structural view of the

closed-loop control circuit of Fig. 2; here the closed-loop control circuits have additional, especially advantageous characteristics.

One additional characteristic is that the switching device 8 here has still further inputs, by way of which a maximum controlling variable value  $Y_{\max}$  and a minimum controlling variable value  $Y_{\min}$  are specified to the switching device 8. The switching device 8 is constructed such that at least the minimum controlling variable value  $Y_{\min}$  and at maximum the maximum controlling variable value  $Y_{\max}$  are output. In other words, a controlling variable range is dynamically specified, within which the controlling variable  $Y(t)$  sent onward at that time to the inverse rectifier circuit  $G_{Si}$  varies. The maximum controlling variable value  $Y_{\max}$  and the minimum controlling variable value  $Y_{\min}$  are as a rule set at the factory. To this extent, they can already be predetermined by means of the suitable design of the switching device 8 itself.

Fig. 3 also shows a further detailed structure of the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  and of the oscillating current controller  $G_{RI}$ . These are both PI controllers, with a proportional component 12, 15 and an integral component 13, 14 series-connected with it. In terms of control technology, the proportional components 12, 15 are each determined by transmission factors  $K_{PRI}$  and  $K_{PRU}$ , respectively; and the integral components 13, 14 are determined by time constants  $T_{NI}$  and  $T_{NU}$ , respectively.

This construction shown in Fig. 3, with series-connected proportional components 12, 15 and integral components 13, 14 has an advantage, over a parallel PI controller structure, in that the controller amplifications  $K_{PRI}$ ,  $K_{PRU}$  and the readjustment times  $T_{NI}$ ,  $T_{NU}$

can each be set separately from one another.

As a further characteristic in this exemplary embodiment, the resultant controlling variable value  $Y(t)$  is fed back by a connection of the output 9 of the switching device 8 to additional inputs 10, 11 of the voltage controller  $G_{RU}$  and the oscillating current controller  $G_{RI}$ , respectively. Internally, the controlling variable value

$Y_U(t)$  or  $Y_I(t)$ , generated by the respective controller  $G_{RU}$  or  $G_{RI}$  and is fed back to upstream of the integral component 13 or 14, and the difference between the fed-back, resultant controlling variable value  $Y(t)$  and each specific controlling variable value  $Y_U(t)$ ,  $Y_I(t)$  is formed.

This means that the two controllers  $G_{RU}$ ,  $G_{RI}$  each have limitation observers, which are coupled such that the integral component 13, 14 of whichever controller  $G_{RU}$ ,  $G_{RI}$  is inactive at the time is carried along with the integral component 13, 14 of the active controller - that is, the controller  $G_{RU}$  or  $G_{RI}$  whose controlling variable value  $Y_U(t)$ ,  $Y_I(t)$  just then forms the resultant controlling variable value  $Y(t)$ . In this way, interference upon switchover between the controllers  $G_{RU}$ ,  $G_{RI}$  is avoided. Otherwise, there would be the risk that the controllers  $G_{RU}$ ,  $G_{RI}$  run up to a stop, which would cause the integral components 13, 14 to be overloaded. That in turn would worsen a transient response upon a switchover (known as a wind-up effect).

Once again, it will be pointed out that the circuit arrangements shown in the drawings are solely exemplary embodiments, and for one skilled in the art, many possible variations exist for achieving a circuit arrangement according to the invention. For instance, adaptive

control of the voltage controller can be done, in such a way that the readjustment time is set as a function of the actual value of the tube voltage over the course of the tube voltage.